



TESTIMONY OF  
**DANIEL NĀHO'OPI'I**  
**Interim President & CEO**  
Hawai'i Tourism Authority  
before the  
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**  
Tuesday, March 11, 2025  
1:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Room 229

In consideration of  
**GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE NO. 511**  
**NOMINATION OF LISA PAULSON**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS, HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY**

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of Lisa Paulson's nomination to serve as a member of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) Board of Directors.

Bringing over 25 years of comprehensive expertise in strategic growth and enhancing visibility for both private and nonprofit sectors, Ms. Paulson embodies the leadership and foresight essential for steering the future of tourism in Hawai'i. She is a member on HTA's Ho'okahua Hawai'i Standing Committee and the Branding Standing Committee. As Chief Executive Officer of the Maui Food Bank, Ms. Paulson is committed to cultivating a hunger-free Maui while fostering vital collaborations with governmental bodies, media outlets, and community organizations.

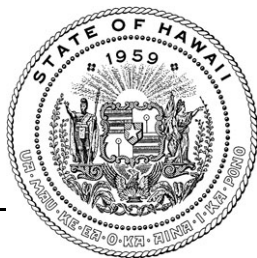
Previously, as the Executive Director/Lobbyist for the Maui Hotel & Lodging Association, Ms. Paulson effectively advocated for legislation that benefited Maui's visitor industry. Her dedication to advancing workforce development initiatives and securing funding for community-based programs demonstrates a strong commitment to enriching the tourism ecosystem in Maui County. Notably, her leadership contributed significantly to enhanced market visibility and engagement, as shown by a remarkable increase in charitable activities and social media interactions.

Ms. Paulson demonstrated exceptional leadership during the Maui wildfires and the subsequent recovery efforts. She dedicated countless hours to assisting Maui visitors, coordinating with the hotel and visitor industry and government, and supporting the local community. Throughout her career, she has been a vital member of Maui's visitor industry and a strong, trustworthy partner with HTA.

As a Community Liaison for the Mayor's Office, Ms. Paulson played an integral role in the successful relaunch of tourism and adeptly managed stakeholder communications. Her involvement in the HTA's Maui Nui Destination Management Action Plan (DMAP) Steering Committee and implementation of the Maui Nui DMAP highlights her understanding of the intricate dynamics of tourism management and the preservation of Hawai'i's beloved natural and cultural resources.

With distinguished recognitions such as the Pacific Business News 2024 Most Admired Leader and USA Today's 2024 Women of the Year, Ms. Paulson has consistently demonstrated the ability to lead with integrity and fervor. In summary, we wholeheartedly support Ms. Paulson for the HTA Board of Directors and believe she will continue to drive positive change in Hawaii's visitor industry.

Mahalo for the opportunity to share our support.



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**  
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI  
A HO'OMĀKA'IKĀ'I

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
GOVERNOR

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LT. GOVERNOR

**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
DIRECTOR

**DANE K. WICKER**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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Testimony of  
**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
**Director**  
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism  
before the  
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

Tuesday, March 11, 2025  
1:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

In consideration of  
**GM 511**  
**Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the**  
**Board of Directors of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority, Gubernatorial Nominee,**  
**LISA PAULSON, for a term to expire 06-30-2027.**

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai and members of the Committee.

I strongly support the confirmation of Ms. Lisa Paulson to the Board of Directors of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA).

Lisa is well-known and highly respected in the community and hospitality industry – she currently serves on the Maui Economic Development Board, Hui No'eau Visual Arts Center Board and Maui Humane Society and formerly served on the Maui United Way Board and Mālama I Ke Ola Health Center Board.

She is the former executive director of the Maui Hotel & Lodging Association where she advocated during the State Legislative sessions and Maui County budget sessions and provided leadership to a number of other entities, including the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association, Women in Lodging & Tourism, Maui Visitors Bureau, Maui Chamber of Commerce, and countless others. Lisa has also served as the Hospitality and Environmental Resource Preservation community liaison for the Mayor's Office at the County of Maui and currently serves as the chief executive officer at the Maui Food

Bank, where she ensures food security for Maui County, including those in the rural communities of Hāna, Molokaʻi and Lānaʻi.

Lisa is a strong advocate and results-driven leader that inspires positive change and cultivates meaningful partnerships. She's been awarded with many recognitions, including the 2024 Most Admired Leaders by Pacific Business News, 2024 Women of the Year by USA Today and 2024 50 Women Over 50 by Forbes.

I believe that Ms. Paulson's experience in government affairs, advocacy and strategic partnerships will be a great asset to the Hawaiʻi Tourism Authority.

Mahalo for the opportunity to offer my strong support.



Testimony of Mufi Hannemann  
President & CEO, Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association

Senate Committee on Economic Development & Tourism  
Governor's Message 511: Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Board of  
Directors of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority, Gubernatorial Nominee, Lisa Paulson

March 11, 2025

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association (HLTA), I am pleased to express support for Governor's Message (GM) 511, nominating Lisa Paulson to serve on the Hawai'i Tourism Authority Board of Directors.

We have worked closely with Lisa throughout her career, most notably during her tenure as Executive Director of the Maui Hotel & Lodging Association (MHLA), where she demonstrated exceptional leadership in supporting Maui's hospitality industry. Under her guidance, MHLA's Charity Walk campaigns flourished, significantly increasing funds raised for Maui's nonprofits. Her ability to strengthen industry partnerships and mobilize resources has been a testament to her deep commitment to the visitor industry and local community.

Lisa's experience in government relations and crisis management has also been invaluable. During her time with the Maui Mayor's Office, we worked alongside her to address the challenges of the pandemic and later, the Maui wildfire response, where she again stepped in as MHLA Executive Director to help coordinate relief efforts. Her ability to navigate complex issues, engage stakeholders, and advocate for responsible tourism makes her an asset to the HTA Board.

With her wealth of experience, strong industry knowledge—particularly on Maui—and unwavering dedication to Hawai'i's visitor industry, Lisa Paulson would make a great addition to this board. HLTA supports her confirmation and urges the committee to advance her nomination.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**GM-511**

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 9:13:33 AM

Testimony for EDT on 3/11/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marsha Sharpe (nee Fahir)	Testifying for Maui Food Bank	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony in Support of Lisa Paulson GM511**

Aloha Kakou,

As Board Chair of Maui Foodbank, I am writing to express my wholehearted support for the Governor's appointment of Lisa Paulson to the Hawaii Tourism Authority Board of Directors. Lisa has been with the foodbank just over 6 months and has made a phenomenal impact to date.

Lisa's appointment represents a significant opportunity to strengthen the vital connection between Hawaii's tourism industry and the communities it impacts. Lisa brings a crucial perspective as a community leader addressing one of our island's most pressing challenges: food insecurity, with her long history in tourism industry - I could not think of a better candidate.

Her appointment is strategically valuable for several reasons:

1. **\*\*Community Representation:\*\*** Lisa will ensure that local community needs are considered in tourism policy decisions, creating a more balanced approach to tourism governance.
2. **\*\*Cross-Sector Collaboration:\*\*** Through this role, Lisa can foster innovative partnerships between the visitor industry and community service organizations, potentially creating sustainable solutions to address food insecurity on Maui.
3. **\*\*Legislative Advancement:\*\*** This position provides direct access to key legislative stakeholders, which will be instrumental in advancing important initiatives like our "Farm to Families" Bill that address systemic food security challenges.

I want to emphasize that this appointment complements Lisa's leadership of Maui Foodbank and will enhance, rather than detract from, her ability to serve our mission. The board of Maui Foodbank fully supports this appointment and believes it aligns perfectly with our strategic goals of developing systemic solutions to hunger in our community.

We view this appointment as recognition of Lisa's exceptional leadership and an opportunity to elevate Maui's community needs in state-level discussions about tourism's role in creating a sustainable future for Hawaii.

Respectfully submitted,

Marsha Sharpe (nee Fahir)  
Board Chair  
Maui Foodbank



Karen Wataru Nakaoka  
Hawai'i Visitors & Convention Bureau  
2270 Kalākaua Avenue, 8th Floor  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96815  
knakaoka@hvcb.org  
March 10, 2025

Hawaii State Senate  
Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Subject: Support for the Confirmation of Lisa Paulson to the Hawaii Tourism Authority Board

Dear Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for the confirmation of Lisa Paulson to serve on the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) Board. Lisa is a dedicated leader with a deep passion for shaping a tourism industry that honors and respects Hawai'i's culture, environment, and people. Her wealth of experience and commitment to responsible tourism make her an outstanding candidate for this important role.

With over 30 years of experience spanning both the visitor industry and community service, Lisa brings a unique and balanced perspective to sustainable tourism. Her expertise in strategic partnerships, advocacy, policy development, community relations, and communications will be invaluable in guiding HTA's efforts to create policies and programs that benefit both residents and visitors alike. Her dedication to fostering a tourism model that is both economically viable and socially responsible aligns with the long-term vision necessary for Hawai'i's future.

Lisa's commitment to ensuring that tourism serves the needs of local communities while preserving the cultural and environmental integrity of the islands is evident in her work. She understands the importance of building resilient and respectful tourism policies that prioritize the well-being of Hawai'i's people. Her leadership and collaborative approach will help strengthen HTA's mission and contribute to a sustainable and balanced future for the industry.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the committee to confirm Lisa Paulson's appointment to the Hawaii Tourism Authority Board. Her expertise, passion, and dedication will make her an invaluable asset to the HTA and the people of Hawai'i.

Thank you for your consideration.

Me ka mahalo nui,

Karen Wataru Nakaoka  
Sr Director Member & Community Engagement



## Testimony in Support of Lisa Paulson GM511

Aloha Kakou,

As Treasurer and Board Member of Maui Foodbank, I am writing to express my wholehearted support for the Governor's appointment of Lisa Paulson to the Hawaii Tourism Authority Board of Directors. Lisa has been with the foodbank just over 6 months and has made a phenomenal impact to date.

Lisa's appointment represents a significant opportunity to strengthen the vital connection between Hawaii's tourism industry and the communities it impacts. Lisa brings a crucial perspective as a community leader addressing one of our island's most pressing challenges: food insecurity, with her long history in tourism industry - I could not think of a better candidate.

Her appointment is strategically valuable for several reasons:

1. **Community Representation:** Lisa will ensure that local community needs are considered in tourism policy decisions, creating a more balanced approach to tourism governance.
2. **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Through this role, Lisa can foster innovative partnerships between the visitor industry and community service organizations, potentially creating sustainable solutions to address food insecurity on Maui.
3. **Legislative Advancement:** This position provides direct access to key legislative stakeholders, which will be instrumental in advancing important initiatives like our "Farm to Families" Bill that address systemic food security challenges.

I want to emphasize that this appointment complements Lisa's leadership of Maui Foodbank and will enhance, rather than detract from, her ability to serve our mission. The board of Maui Foodbank fully supports this appointment and believes it aligns perfectly with our strategic goals of developing systemic solutions to hunger in our community.

We view this appointment as recognition of Lisa's exceptional leadership and an opportunity to elevate Maui's community needs in state-level discussions about tourism's role in creating a sustainable future for Hawaii.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Chee, Jr.  
Board Member/Treasurer  
Maui Foodbank

**GM-511**

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 9:34:07 AM

Testimony for EDT on 3/11/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brian Etheredge	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Kakou,

As a board member of Maui Foodbank, I am writing to express my wholehearted support for the Governor's appointment of Lisa Paulson to the Hawaii Tourism Authority Board of Directors. Lisa has been with the foodbank just over 6 months and has made a phenomenal impact to date.

Lisa's appointment represents a significant opportunity to strengthen the vital connection between Hawaii's tourism industry and the communities it impacts. Lisa brings a crucial perspective as a community leader addressing one of our island's most pressing challenges: food insecurity, with her long history in tourism industry - I could not think of a better candidate.

Her appointment is strategically valuable for several reasons:

1. **\*\*Community Representation:\*\*** Lisa will ensure that local community needs are considered in tourism policy decisions, creating a more balanced approach to tourism governance.
2. **\*\*Cross-Sector Collaboration:\*\*** Through this role, Lisa can foster innovative partnerships between the visitor industry and community service organizations, potentially creating sustainable solutions to address food insecurity on Maui.
3. **\*\*Legislative Advancement:\*\*** This position provides direct access to key legislative stakeholders, which will be instrumental in advancing important initiatives like our "Farm to Families" Bill that address systemic food security challenges.

I want to emphasize that this appointment complements Lisa's leadership of Maui Foodbank and will enhance, rather than detract from, her ability to serve our mission. The board of Maui Foodbank fully supports this appointment and believes it aligns perfectly with our strategic goals of developing systemic solutions to hunger in our community.

We view this appointment as recognition of Lisa's exceptional leadership and an opportunity to elevate Maui's community needs in state-level discussions about tourism's role in creating a sustainable future for Hawaii.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Etheredge  
Maui Foodbank

**GM-511**

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 2:50:08 PM

Testimony for EDT on 3/11/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gil Keith-Agaran	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Chair

Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice-Chair

I support the appointment of Lisa Paulson to the Hawaii Tourism Authority.

I presently serve on the Maui Food Bank board where Ms. Paulson is presently employed as Chief Executive Officer. However, I have known and worked with her in past years as a local lawyer, non-profit board and public school board member, Maui County administrator and legislator when she worked at Kaahumanu Shopping Center, the County of Maui and Maui Hotel and Lodging Association. Ms. Paulson is very familiar with the visitor industry from her prior work experience. Along with that vocational background, Ms. Paulson will also bring insights from her varied service on Maui non-profit boards on how tourism fits in with economic diversification on Maui in health, technology and retail sectors.

I am confident that she will be an active and contributing member of this board.

Please vote to recommend the full Senate confirm Ms. Paulson to the Hawaii Tourism Authority.

**GM-511**

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 10:19:35 AM

Testimony for EDT on 3/11/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michele McLean	Testifying for Maui Food Bank	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Please accept this testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of Lisa Paulson's nomination to serve on the Board of Directors of the Maui Tourism Authority.

I have known Lisa professionally and personally for more than ten years, and find her to be exceptionally hard-working, amiable, personable, professional, smart, responsible, dedicated, and committed to the community. With her prior experience with the Maui Hotel and Lodging Association, and now in her current position with the Maui Food Bank (in which she is excelling), she will bring knowledge, skills, and valuable perspectives to the HTA. This will not only benefit the HTA, but will also serve Maui County and the Maui Food Bank (disclosure – I am a current MFB Board member). With the August 2023 wildfires and ongoing recovery as an example of how extensively the visitor industry can intertwine with local community issues, having someone of Lisa's caliber on the HTA Board can prove to be invaluable.

I would be happy to provide any further information you may require, and request your support of Lisa Paulson's nomination to serve on the Board of the Hawaii Tourism Authority.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Michele McLean

**GM-511**

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 10:14:11 PM

Testimony for EDT on 3/11/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Karin S. Carlson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Lisa Paulson is an excellent choice for the appointment to the Hawaii Tourism Authority.

She has a proven track record demonstrating her dedication to the people of Hawaii.

She is the current CEO of the Maui Food Bank and has been working diligently to ensure food security for all of Maui County.

Because she previously served as the leader of the Maui Hotel & Lodging Association, she is well versed in the issues and challenges facing the State of Hawaii as well as all the counties.

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

March 10, 2025

Aloha Chair Decoite, Vice Chair Wakai and Committee members,

I am writing to enthusiastically recommend Lisa Paulson for a position on the HTA Board of Directors. I have witnessed firsthand her deep commitment to promoting a tourism industry that honors Hawai'i's culture, environment, and people.

With over 30 years of invaluable experience in both the visitor industry and community service, Lisa has developed a unique and well-rounded perspective on sustainable tourism. Her extensive background in strategic partnerships, policy development, advocacy, and community relations has equipped her with the skills necessary to drive positive change within the tourism sector.

What sets Lisa apart is her unwavering dedication to ensuring that tourism benefits not only visitors but also the residents of Hawai'i. She has consistently demonstrated a remarkable ability to create mutually beneficial solutions that balance economic growth with social responsibility. This commitment is particularly evident in her tireless work to foster transparent and respectful communication between stakeholders, all while advocating for policies that prioritize Hawai'i's long-term cultural and environmental health.

Lisa is someone who genuinely believes in a future where tourism is economically viable and socially responsible, supporting future generations without compromising the values that make Hawai'i unique. I have no doubt that Lisa will bring the same level of passion, expertise, and leadership to the HTA Board of Directors as she has in every role she has undertaken.

I offer my highest recommendation for Lisa, as she is well-qualified to contribute to balanced, resilient, and culturally respectful tourism policies and programs that will shape the future of Hawai'i's tourism industry.

Sincerely,  
John Pele  
Executive Director  
Maui Hotel and Lodging Association

**GM-511**

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 10:24:58 AM

Testimony for EDT on 3/11/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Moana Lutey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Kakou,

I am a Board member for the Maui Food Bank and am writing in full support of the Governor's appointment of Lisa Paulson to the Hawaii Tourism Authority Board of Directors. I have known Lisa for approximately 7 years, having worked with her when she was an Executive Assistant to (Ret.) Mayor Michael Victorino before she became the CEO for the Maui Food Bank. To put it mildly, I was thrilled when Lisa applied to lead the Maui Food Bank because I had seen how effective she was in getting the job done as an executive assistant. Lisa has exceeded our expectations at the Maui Food Bank and will be the same as a member of the Hawaii Tourism Board.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Moana M. Lutey